

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Butterfly Trail

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature

Staff at the Asheville-based non-profit Monarch Rescue recently reported that monarch butterfly eggs and caterpillars were found at a pollinator garden they worked with students to install at Yancey County's Mountain Heritage High School.

The high-school pollinator garden is one of 100 sites recently added to the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail. The trail, established in April 2013, raises awareness of the monarch's plight and encourages the conservation of butterflies and their habitats. Most of the trail's sites are in Georgia, though additional sites are found throughout the United States as well as in Canada and Japan.

While monarchs are found across the United States — as recently as 1996 numbering some 1 billion — their numbers have declined by about 90 percent in recent years, a result of numerous threats, particularly the loss of habitat and mortality resulting from pesticide use. Native milkweed, the monarch caterpillar's sole food source, has been eradicated or severely degraded in many areas across the United States in recent years.

The monarch is perhaps the best-known butterfly species in the United States. Every year it undertakes one of the world's most remarkable migrations, traveling thousands of miles from Mexico, across the United States, to Canada.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.